

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

1. Name

historic

BERNICE J.

and/or common

Chesapeake Bay skipjack

2. Location

street & number Town Dock, foot of High Street

n/a not for publication

city, town Chestertown

n/a vicinity of

congressional district

First

state

Maryland

code

24

county

Kent

code

029

3. Classification

Category

☐ district☐ building(s)☐ structure☐ site☒ object

Ownership

☐ public☒ private☐ both

Public Acquisition

☐ in process☐ being considered☒ not applicable

Status

☒ occupied☐ unoccupied☐ work in progress

Accessible

☒ yes: restricted☐ yes: unrestricted☐ no

Present Use

☐ agriculture☐ commercial☒ educational☐ entertainment☐ government☐ industrial☐ military☐ museum☐ park☐ private residence☐ religious☐ scientific☒ transportation☐ other:

4. Owner of Property

name

Captain Andrew McCown

Echo Hill Outdoor School

street & number

city, town Tolchester (Worton P.O.) vicinity of

state Maryland 21678

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.

n/a

street & number

city, town

state

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Survey of Surviving Traditional

Chesapeake Bay Craft

has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no

date 1983-1984

☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records

Maryland Historical Trust, 21 State Circle

city, town

Annapolis

state

Maryland 21401

7. Description

K-939

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		<input type="checkbox"/> n/a

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

DESCRIPTION SUMMARY:

This vessel is a 42' long two-sail bateau, or V-bottomed deadrise type of centerboard sloop, commonly referred to as a skipjack. Built in 1904 at Young's Creek, Virginia by W. Thomas Young of Parksley, she shows typical Bay cross-planked construction methods. She has a beam of 15', a depth of 3.3', and a gross register tonnage of 8. Her overall length is 58', to the end of the bowsprit. The vessel carries a typical skipjack rig - a jib-headed mainsail laced to the boom and carried on wood hoops at the mast, and a large jib with a club on its foot. She has a longhead bow and a low square transom stern. Her wooden hull, approximately 75% original is painted the traditional white. The skipjack, which worked dredging oysters through the 1970s, is now owned by a non-profit educational organization and is used for outdoor education on the Upper Bay.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

BERNICE J. has a high bow with an almost plumb stem and a deep cutwater. Her transom is rounded and surrounded with beading. Originally built of yellow bull pine, the vessel has been restored using the same material with the addition of some oak. Her deck is close-laid and 90% original. She was said to have been "built with a hatchet" by W. Thomas Young.

The vessel has a centerboard and a plug rudder carried on a rudder stock mounted inboard of the transom. There was a chock for the pushboat centered on the transom but this is now used for an outboard engine as the pushboat has been removed, being too heavy for the vessel. Davits for the pushboat remain. The single mast is 57' high and is raked aft. It is set up with double shrouds, a forestay, jibstay, and topping lift leading to the end of the 42' boom (measuring the same as the deck). The bowsprit is squared on the tip and the longhead is braced with head rails of wood. The sails are of dacron and were made in Hong Kong for the skipjack, VIRGINIA W. and passed along to BERNICE J. when the former was re-rigged. The mast and boom also formerly belonged to the VIRGINIA W. There are lazyjacks on both main and jib for easier furling.

The decks are flush, of close-laid planking. Deck structures include: a wheelbox with steering gear inside and the wheel mounted on the forward end; a cabin with three tiers including a doghouse providing full-height standing room, with four round ports along its sides; a small deck hatch; a large two-tiered deck hatch abaft the mast; and a sampson post on the foredeck. The deck is surrounded by a low lograil deepening into a pinrail aft. At present no dredging gear is aboard although future plans call for the installation of a set of hand winders to be used for demonstration.

The vessel is painted white. Decorative trailboards with the name BERNICE J. set against a background of scrolled vines and leaves and a flag-shield motif are carried on the longhead.

8. Significance

K-539

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1904 Builder ~~Architect~~ W. Thomas Young

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY:

This vessel is significant as being one of the 36 surviving traditional Chesapeake Bay skipjacks, although no longer a member of the last commercial sailing fleet in the United States, being used instead for educational programs. Out of a fleet of hundreds of skipjacks that worked Bay waters in the early years of this century, today only this small number remain to carry on the tradition of working sail. BERNICE J. is of interest as being one of the older skipjacks surviving in Chesapeake waters, although no longer a member of the dredging fleet. She was built in 1904 by W. Thomas Young of Parksley, Virginia on Youngs Creek, Accomac County, Virginia and was named after the builder's first child. Young was said to have "built more dredge boats than can be remembered, including the CLAUDE W. SOMERS of 1911. BERNICE J. is also of interest because she is believed to be the first skipjack ever owned by a black - Melvin Christy of Chrisfied, Maryland who oystered along with his wife and used the vessel through 1981. The Echo Hill Outdoor School acquired the vessel from Christy in that year and restored her for use as a "floating classroom." The vessel is still laid out as a working dredgeboat and will soon have a set of handwinders aboard for demonstration purposes. This is of great educational value as handwinders have not been used on skipjacks since c. 1920. Although restored by the Echo Hill School, BERNICE J. is 75% original, and must have been an extremely well-built vessel. She is the official representative of Kent County and flies the County flag, as well as the Maryland flag. She is the only skipjack with an outboard engine rather than a pushboat.

HISTORY AND SUPPORT:

The skipjack evolved as a distinct type of Bay vessel in the 1890s as a cheaper-to-construct alternative to the earlier bugeyes and other traditional framed craft, in a period when shipbuilding costs were rising and the oyster catch was diminishing. The type was devised by enlarging (to 25 to 60 feet) the hull of the ordinary, unframed, square-sterned Bay crabbing skiff, and giving it a deadrise bottom, a deck, a cabin and a sloop rig. The result - with its unframed, hard chine, cross-planked, V-bottom - proved inexpensive to build, easy to repair, and could be constructed by a competent house carpenter. Skipjacks were specifically designed as oyster dredge boats, with wide beams and low freeboard lending stability and providing a large working space on deck. The single masted rig, with sharp-headed mainsail and large jib, was easy to handle, powerful in light winds, and handy in coming about for another pass over the oyster beds.

9. Major Bibliographical References

E-539

Howard I. Chapelle, American Small Sailing Craft (New York: W.W. Norton, 1951)

Mary Corddry, "Restored Skipjack will serve as floating camp," Kent County News, 8/31/83.

Bernice J., Jewel of Kent County, Pamphlet published by Echo Hill Outdoor School, 1983.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Chestertown, MD

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

1	8
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4	0	8	1	9	0
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4	3	4	0	0	4	0
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Verbal boundary description and justification : The historic boundaries of this floating vessel are conterminous with the hull. The boat is docked at the location indicated in Item 2.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state n/a code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Anne Witty/M. E. Hayward

organization Maryland Historical Society

date May 1984

street & number 201 West Monument Street

telephone 301-685-3750

city or town Baltimore

state Maryland 21201

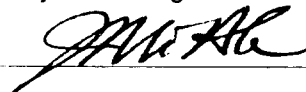
12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

☒ national ☐ state ☐ local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature



8-1-85

title STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER

date

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

date

city, town state

7. Description

Survey No. _____

Condition

☐ excellent
☒ good
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

☐ unaltered
☒ altered

Check one

☐ original site
☐ moved date of move _____

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

This vessel is a 42' long two-sail bateau, or V-bottomed deadrise type of centerboard sloop, commonly referred to as a skipjack. Built in 1904 at Youngs Creek, Virginia by W. Thomas Young of Parksley, she shows typical Bay cross-planked construction methods. She has a beam of 15', a depth of 3.3', and a gross register tonnage of 8. Her overall length is 58', to the end of the bowsprit. The vessel carries a typical skipjack rig--a jib-headed mainsail laced to the boom and carried on wood hoops at the mast, and a large jib with a club on its foot. She has a longhead bow and a low, square transom stern. Her wooden hull, approximately 75% original, is painted the traditional white. The skipjack, which worked dredging oysters through the 1970s, is now owned by a non-profit educational organization and is used for outdoor education on the Upper Bay.

BERNICE J. has a high bow with an almost plumb stem and a deep cutwater. Her transom stern is low, with little freeboard aft. The transom is rounded and surrounded with beading. Originally built of yellow bull pine, the vessel has been restored using the same material with the addition of some oak. Her deck is close-laid and 90% original. She was said to have been "built with a hatchet" by W. Thomas Youngs.

The vessel has a centerboard and a plug rudder carried on a rudder stock mounted inboard of the transom. There was a chock for the pushboat centered on the transom but this is now used for an outboard engine as the pushboat has been removed, being too heavy for the vessel. Davits for the pushboat remain. The single mast is 57' high and is raked aft. It is set up with double shrouds, a forestay, jibstay, and topping lift leading to the end of the 42' boom (measuring the same as the deck). The bowsprit is squared on the tip and the longhead is braced with head rails of wood. The sails are of dacron and were made in Hong Kong for the skipjack VIRGINIA W. and passed along to BERNICEJ. when the former was re-rigged. The mast and boom also formerly belonged to the VIRGINIA W. There are lazyjacks on both main and jib for easier furling.

The decks are flush, of close-laid pine planking. Deck structures include: a wheelbox with steering gear inside and the wheel mounted on the forward end; a cabin with three tiers including a doghouse providing full-height standing room, with four round ports along its sides; a small deck hatch; a large two-tiered deck hatch abaft the mast; and a sampson post on the foredeck. The deck is surrounded by a low lograil deepening into a pinrail aft. At present no dredging gear is aboard although future plans call for the installation of a set of hand winders to be used for demonstration.

The vessel is painted white. Decorative trailboards with the name BERNICE J. set against a background of scrolled vines and leaves and a flag-shield motif are carried on the longhead.

8. Significance

Survey No. K-

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1904 Builder/Architect W. Thomas Young

check: Applicable Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D
and/or

Applicable Exception: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Level of Significance: ☐ national ☐ state ☐ local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

This vessel is significant as being one of the 36 surviving traditional Chesapeake Bay skipjacks, although no longer a member of the last commercial sailing fleet in the United States, being used instead for educational programs. Out of a fleet of hundreds of skipjacks that worked Bay waters in the early years of this century, today only this small number remain to carry on the tradition of working sail.

The skipjack evolved as a distinct type of Bay vessel in the 1890's as a cheaper-to-construct alternative to the earlier bugeyes and other traditional framed craft, in a period when shipbuilding costs were rising and the oyster catch was diminishing. The type was devised enlarging (to 25 to 60 feet) the hull of the ordinary, unframed, square--sterned Bay crabbing skiff, and giving it a deadrise bottom, a-deck, a cabin and a sloop rig. The result--with its unframed, hard chine, cross-planked, V-bottom--proved inexpensive to build, easy to repair, and could be constructed by a competent house carpenter. Skipjacks were specifically designed as oyster dredge boats, with wide beams and low freeboard lending stability and providing a large working space on deck. The single masted rig, with sharp-headed mainsail and large jib, was easy to handle, powerful in light winds, and handy in coming about for another pass over the oyster beds.

The Maryland oyster season begins November 1 and ends March 15. Skipjacks must dredge under sail on all days except Monday and Tuesdays, when they are allowed to use their motorized pushboat for dredging. The pushboat, normally, carried on davits at the stern, is lowered into the water and literally "pushes" the skipjack along from behind, the nose of the pushboat resting against a "jig" on the stern of the skipjack. The pushboat can also legally be used to get the skipjack to and from the oyster beds each day. Each skipjack's crew is made up of the captain, who is often also the owner, and five crew members.

BERNICE J. is of interest as being one of the older skipjacks surviving in Chesapeake waters, although no longer a member of the dredging fleet. She was built in 1904 by W. Thos. Young of Parksley, Va. on Youngs Creek, Accomac Co., Va. and was named after the builder's first child. Young was said to have "built more dredge boats than can be remembered, including the CLAUDE W. SOMERS of 1911. BERNICE J. is also of interest because she is believed to be the first skipjack ever owned by a black--Melvin Christy of Crisfield, Md. who oystered along with his wife and used the vessel through 1981. The Echo Hill Outdoor School acquired the vessel from Christy in that year and restored

9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. K-

Howard I. Chapelle, American Small Sailing Craft (New York:W.W. Norton, 1951)

Mary Corddry, "Restored Skipjack will serve as floating camp," Kent County News, Aug.31,1983

Bernice J., Jewel of Kent County, pamphlet published by Echo Hill Outdoor School, 1983

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____

Quadrangle scale _____

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

A

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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

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Verbal boundary description and justification _____

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title	Anne Witty/ M.E. Hayward		
------------	--------------------------	--	--

organization	Maryland Historical Society	date	5/84
--------------	-----------------------------	------	------

street & number	201 W. Monument St.	telephone	685-3750
-----------------	---------------------	-----------	----------

city or town	Baltimore	state	Maryland 21201
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The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
Shaw House
21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 269-2438

8. Significance

Survey No. K-539

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates

Builder/Architect

check: Applicable Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D
and/or

Applicable Exception: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Level of Significance: ☐ national ☐ state ☐ local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

her for use as a "floating classroom." The vessel is still laid out as a working dredgeboat and will soon have a set of handwinders aboard for demonstration purposes. This is of great educational value as handwinders have not been used on skipjacks since c. 1920.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____

Quadrangle scale _____

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

A

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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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Verbal boundary description and justification

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title _____

organization _____ date _____

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____

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return to: Maryland Historical Trust
Shaw House
21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 269-2438



4344
4343
510 000
FEET
4342
K-539
BERNICE J.
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KENT COUNTY
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12'30"
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CHESAPEAKE
BAY
SKIPJACK
FLEET
THEMATIC
GROUP
4339

Bernice T.
©T. Tyler Campbell '83



K- 539

BERNICE J.

starboard side - aerial view
Chestertown, Md.

J.Tyler Campbell 1983

© 1983 J. Tyler Campbell